



TOUR INFORMATION FOR CENTRAL KENYA

These notes are designed to help you prepare fully for the tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING KENYA: United Kingdom citizens will need a passport valid for six months or more at the time of arrival in Kenya and a visa. This visa must be applied for individually. The Kenya High Commission's contact details are: 45 Portland Place, London, W1N 4AS (Tel: 020-7636-2371/5). You can download a visa application form from the High Commission's website: www.kenyahighcommission.net or complete an application form online with www.kenya-airways.com. If you take your application to the High Commission you can collect your visa the next day. Please note payment can be in cash or postal order. Personal cheques are not accepted. Citizens of other nations should contact the nearest Kenyan Embassy for entry requirements.

Visas can also be applied for on arrival in Kenya and this process is fairly straightforward. No additional photos are required, the visa application form is available on arrival and payment can be made in cash (£30 sterling or \$50 US as of January 2013).

Further information on how to apply for a visa will be sent with your final invoice.

There are visa service agencies that can provide you with an information pack on how to obtain a visa. They will also process your application for you however they will charge a handling and processing fee. One such company is Trailfinders Visa Service <http://visas.trailfinders.com> (tel: 0207 368 1504).

Evidence of a yellow fever vaccination must be shown for entry into Kenya if you are arriving directly from a country where yellow fever is known to be present.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

ARRIVAL AND INTRODUCTORY MEETING: This tour will begin on the morning of Day 1 with your arrival at the Nairobi international airport. Your guides will meet you at the airport and transfer you to our group hotel to check-in, meet the other participants, and spend the rest of your day birding.

TIME DIFFERENCE: Kenya is three hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (e.g. when it is 12.00 in the UK it will be 15.00 in Kenya.)

CURRENCY: The currency is the Kenya shilling (KES). Kenya shillings cannot be brought in or taken out of the country, but money can be changed easily at the airport on arrival or at our hotel in Nairobi, and at a few of our lodges during the tour. Traveller's cheques are becoming more difficult to exchange so we recommend taking sterling notes. As the tour price includes travel, accommodation and main meal costs, you need only bring enough money to cover items of a personal nature.

LANGUAGE: English and Swahili are widely spoken.

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CLIMATE: Despite its proximity to the equator, much of Kenya feels anything but tropical, and many people are not prepared for how chilly it can be. Some of the tour is at elevations over 5,000 feet and highland days can be quite cool if there is cloud cover. However, when the sun does shine, it can conversely get very hot, especially in the Masai Mara and at Lake Baringo. Humidity is low. Rain is possible almost anywhere but we will probably only experience it in the highland areas and around some of the Rift Valley lakes and even then it should not be prolonged. Although Kenya has, in theory, two distinct rainy periods— a long rainy season in March and April and a short one in November and December - these can be late or early or fail altogether. A lightweight sweater should be adequate for some of the cool evenings and a lightweight jacket will be useful for early mornings at Mountain Lodges and at Naro Moru.

PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: During any tour to Kenya a fair amount of birdwatching is done from the vehicles. This is mainly because we spend a lot of time in National Parks where getting out of the vehicle is not allowed except in certain allocated areas. As each vehicle has roof hatches and each person has a window seat, this is not as daunting as it might first appear.

There are also a few travelling days where long drives are required. You should be prepared to spend more time in the vehicle than you would do on tours to other countries. While all roads within the national parks and reserves are dirt tracks of varying quality, there are also lengthy trips on public dirt roads – part of the journey to the Masai Mara can be bumpy at times. Some interesting birds are found along the roadsides and we may break our journeys investigating some of these areas.

There are no strenuous walks on this tour. Most walking is done around the grounds of the lodges we stay at. At Baringo we do walk along the base of the Baringo cliff which involves walking through rocky and, at times, bushy terrain but this is not particularly arduous. We also have a scenic walk overlooking the Masai Mara, outside the reserve.

Most of the days begin at first light, at about 06.30. We will either have a pre-breakfast walk for about an hour or have breakfast at 06.30 in order to make an early start. When we are not moving on to a new lodge we will sometimes spend the morning birdwatching and return to our accommodation for lunch. We then usually have a break or go birdwatching around the grounds before going out in the vehicles again later in the afternoon.

Most days will finish at dusk and we try to allow a one-hour break before we meet to do the daily checklist and have dinner. On a few days this break may be shorter or longer depending on the schedule. On one night, there will be an optional night-time game drive and bird excursion.

ALTITUDE: Nairobi is around 5,500 ft. The Rift Valley is the lowest point at around 3,000 ft. Mountain Lodge is 7,200ft and depending on the route taken to drive from Naro Moro to Lake Nakuru we may go as high as 8,500 ft. This is a day spent driving.

HEALTH: **It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the region you are visiting.**

A malaria preventative is essential. Useful information on all aspects of malaria, including how to reduce your chances of being bitten can be found at the website <http://www.preventingmalaria.info>. It is strongly recommended that you have up-to-date inoculations against, typhoid, meningitis, polio, and yellow fever. It might also be worth checking that you are adequately protected against tetanus.

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Kenya is remarkably free of biting insects although mosquitoes (which are mainly active at night) and ticks occur locally – at Lake Baringo, for instance. We recommend insect repellents with a high concentration of DEET. Care must be taken to avoid getting the DEET repellent on optical equipment, as DEET dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. Camping supply stores carry some reasonably effective alternatives that contain natural products and aren't corrosive.

Products containing tick- and chigger-repelling chemicals are particularly effective. Camping supply stores sell such a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. These sprays are now available in pump bottles, but be aware that most airlines no longer allow the transport of aerosol sprays.

While water can be safe to drink, the high mineral content can be physically disruptive, especially in the Rift Valley, so it is best avoided. We shall provide bottled water for all excursions, and will always have a supply on the bus when travelling. Most lodges (but not all) provide flasks of purified water in the rooms; bottled water is readily available at the lodges. There will be some opportunities to purchase bottled water from supermarkets etc. where it will be cheaper. Soda water, soft drinks and beer are ubiquitous and safe to drink.

Mild stomach upsets can be difficult to avoid in Kenya and we strongly suggest bringing an adequate supply of a diarrhoea treatment such as Imodium or Arret. Several sachets of re-hydrate powder can also be very useful as they replace the sugars and salts lost during bouts of diarrhoea. Finally, be sure to bring adequate supplies of all personal medication, as it may be impossible to obtain them during the tour.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: During the tour we'll stay in some tented-camps – the rest are lodges. The tents are permanent structures with concrete floors, thatched roofs, proper beds and built-in flush-toilets and showers. They all have electric lights. Where a camp generator provides the power, this is usually turned off late at night and turned on again early in the morning. Hot water is usually provided by wood-fired heaters each serving several tents. It is important to remember that you may need to let the water run for some minutes before it gets hot.

FOOD: The food throughout the tour is generally good to excellent and many people are surprised at the high standard provided, even in the remoter parts of the country. Breakfasts are buffets offering everything from full cooked breakfasts to cereals and fresh fruit. At other meals there is almost always a choice of two or three main courses. Vegetarians are well catered for.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

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LAUNDRY: Laundry services are available at all the lodges where we stay more than one night, but bring a small container of soap for your own overnight laundering.

ELECTRICITY: 220/240V AC 50Hz. In many places where we stay they still use a 13 amp 3-pin square plug as used in the UK. If you have rechargeable batteries, ensure you have the right adaptors/converters able to fit these outlets. At the tented-camp the only access to charging facilities will be at reception.

CLOTHING: Dress will be informal throughout the tour. During most of the tour, the warm daytime temperatures will dictate light clothing. There will be some strong sun making long sleeves and long trousers preferable over short sleeves and shorts. However for the cool evenings and the cool temperatures in the central Highlands we suggest bring a sweater or fleece and waterproof gear and perhaps even some light gloves. Some of the lodges have swimming pools.

The following items are recommended basic requirements:

Sun hat	Outdoor jacket, preferably waterproof
Walking shoes *	Warm sweater or fleece
Rain gear	Small folding umbrella

*Light-weight walking shoes or boots are adequate for most people. However we do encounter rocky and uneven terrain and possible wet conditions under foot in a few places so you may prefer to bring conventional walking boots.

MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT: Please bring the following:

Small rucksack/shoulder bag	Torch (with extra batteries)
Notebook and pencil	Sunglasses
Alarm clock	Sun protection lotion
Pocket knife (with bottle opener)	Field guide
Plastic bags	Seat cushion (optional)
Water Canteen	Insect repellent
Personal medication	

Optional: Telescope & tripod, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage). Telescopes are an advantage when we are birding away from the vehicles for any length of time, such as from the roof of Mountain Lodge and at some of the Rift Valley lakes. They can also be used off a tripod when using the open roof hatches by resting them on a bean bag.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will provide the following:

Telescope & tripod	Basic first-aid kit
Field guides, reference books & maps	Spot-light

LUGGAGE: The checked-luggage weight limit on most international flights is usually 20kg (44lbs). If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours porters are not available to carry your luggage to the room. **Please do not bring any bag that is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself.** As a general rule, in addition to using your Sunbird luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage. Only one item of hand luggage may be carried on.

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Seating space in the vehicles is adequate but not roomy so please try to keep the hand luggage you wish to bring into the vehicles to a minimum.

Rules governing the luggage that may be checked in for flights or carried on board vary considerably between airlines with some companies now allowing only one checked bag per person, while others still allow two. Our Final Information document which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure will give details of the specific regulations imposed by the airline that we will be using for this tour.

PHOTOGRAPHY: East Africa offers abundant photographic opportunities. Since dust may be a problem, especially in the dry season, cameras should be packed in tight plastic bags large enough to hold both camera and lens. As many good shots will come through vehicle windows or roof hatches, cameras must be ready to use. A beanbag for resting the camera or telescope on is a very useful piece of equipment and is recommended. If you wish to 'digiscope' please ensure that you bring your own telescope. Be sure to bring enough memory storage, spare camera batteries and battery chargers.

Note: Many local tribal people do not like themselves or their animals to be photographed and have been known to get very angry with anyone who ignores their wishes! Some locals in areas frequented by tourists will agree to be photographed in exchange for payment but this must be negotiated in advance. Generally you should always ask before taking photographs of people whatever their nationality.

Please note that this is essentially a birdwatching tour. There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation. Please note that this is essentially a birdwatching tour. There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Stephen Allen at Stephen Allen Insurance Broker, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234 215194. Please contact him for a quote and he will send the schedule directly to you.

TRANSPORT: Transportation is in long wheel-base Land Cruisers with roof hatches for window-free viewing and photography. Our drivers are professionals, skilled at finding birds and mammals, and at repairing vehicles. Some of the driving is on unmade roads and while most of these are in good condition there are some bad sections, notably driving in and out of the Masai Mara.

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In most National Parks leaving the vehicles is prohibited. Each person will have a window seat and the roof hatches are helpful, but come prepared to spend an unusual amount of time in the vehicles. There is usually drinking water provided in the vehicles. The leader will arrange a seating rotation. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles.

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar. Our leaders do not expect to be tipped for their services, and there is no need for anyone in the group to organise a collection for them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Field Guides:

Kingdon, J. 1997. The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals. Academic Press, London. ISBN 0-12-408355-2. This excellent field guide covers the mammals of the whole of the African continent. Good colour illustrations are included of most species and the text is detailed. The taxonomy followed is very up-to-date, but some of the English names used are unfamiliar ones and might seem a little confusing at first. **Recommended.**

Larsen, T. B. 1996. The Butterflies of Kenya and their natural history. Oxford University Press, Oxford. ISBN 0-19-850005-X. An excellent, comprehensive field guide to Kenya's butterflies, now available in paperback. Its only real failing is that while English names are given for many of the species in the text, only the scientific names are given as captions to the plates.

Spawls, S., K. Howell, R. Drewes, and J. Ashe. 2002. A Field Guide to the Reptiles of East Africa. Academic Press, London. ISBN 0-12-656470-1. An excellent new field guide to East Africa's reptiles. Probably too specialised for most people to want to bring their own copy, especially as it is fairly big, but the leader will have a copy for group reference.

Stevenson, T. and J. Fanshawe. 2001. Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa. T. & A. D. Poyser, London. ISBN 0-85661-079-8. The latest, excellent field guide to the birds of East Africa is **highly recommended** and will be the main field guide used on this tour. The guide comprehensively covers Kenya and is vastly superior to other guides in its abundance of illustrations, particularly. However, please note that this field guide includes about 350 species that do not occur in Kenya.

Van Perlo, B. 1995. Collins Illustrated Checklist: Birds of East Africa. HarperCollins, London. ISBN 0-00-219937-8. A pocket-sized comprehensive field guide that illustrates all of East Africa's birds in colour and has distribution maps. Some of the illustrations are rather small, the text is brief, and some of the English names used differ from those in Zimmerman, et al. and are therefore rather confusing. If you like to carry a book in the field this is the one to use, but in all other situations Zimmerman et al. is our recommended bird guide.

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Zimmerman, D. A., Turner, D. A., Pearson, D. J. 1996. Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania. A&C Black, London. ISBN 0-7136-3968-7. Despite being rather bulky, this book stands as the definitive guide to the region's birds. A slightly smaller paperback edition has recently been published and is now the **recommended** edition to bring on the tour.

Ornithological References:

Brown, L., K. Newman and E. Urban. 1982 onwards. The Birds of Africa. (8 volumes). Academic Press, London. Six volumes of this monumental work have been published so far, covering all of the non-passerines and some of the passerines. They contain a wealth of information as well as superb colour plates of every species. Too bulky to bring on the tour, but well worth referring to before and after the trip.

Lewis, A. D. and D. Pomerey. 1989. A Bird Atlas of Kenya. Balkema, Rotterdam. The best distributional book on Kenya birds by far. The distribution of each species is described in detail and illustrated with a map. A must for the serious birdwatcher. This is not an identification guide and contains no illustrations.

Wells, M. G. 1998. World Bird Species Checklist: with alternative English and scientific names. Worldlist, Bushey, Hertfordshire. Undoubtedly, the most well cross-referenced world list, and of great help when trying to make sense of the various English and scientific names used in different books. Available through most specialist bird book dealers, but also direct from the author, at a special discount price to Sunbird tour participants of £20. Please send cheques with orders direct to M.G.Wells, 39 Lukes Lea, Marsworth, Nr Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 4NH and mention which tour you are booked on.

Mammals:

Kingdon, J. The Kingdon Pocket Guide to African Mammals. 2004. A&C Black, London. ISBN 0-7136-6981-0. A pocket-sized version of the previous guide which is much more 'user-friendly'. It contains the same illustrations and maps, but with less text. **Recommended**.

Other Groups:

Blundell, Michael. 1987. Collins Guide to the Wild Flowers of East Africa. Collins, London. A useful guide containing 864 colour photographs of East African flowers.

Carcasson, R.H. 1981. Collins Handguide to the Butterflies of Africa. Collins, London. A nicely illustrated guide to a selection of African butterflies. Many of the more spectacular Kenyan species are included.

MAPS: Our ground agent will provide a map of the country along with their welcome pack. There are several maps which can be bought in advance from the following outlets but none are very detailed.

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

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OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles. Four of these are:

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

Subbuteo Books
Tel: 0870 010 9700
www.wildlifebooks.com

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

Books for Birders
Tel: 01263 741139
www.birdingworld.co.uk

AFRICAN BIRD CLUB: Please support this charity which aims to raise money to support conservation projects, encourages an interest in the conservation of birds, and liaises with and promotes the work of existing societies within the region. You will find their contact details and further information about the Club at www.africanbirdclub.org

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc., and your air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour. If you have any questions about the trip, please contact us.